



Fire Districts

Public Meetings

Moraga-Orinda Fire District

Board of Directors
Wednesday, April 19, 7 p.m.
Go to the website for meeting location, times and agendas. Visit www.mofd.org

ConFire Board of Directors

Tuesday, April 11, 1:30 p.m.
Board Chamber room 107,
Administration Building,
651 Pine St., Martinez
For meeting times and agendas,
visit <http://alturl.com/5p9pu>.

MOFD unrestricted general fund deficit soars to \$60 million

By Nick Marnell

The Moraga-Orinda Fire District board unanimously approved revised financial reports from 2105 and 2016 at its March 15 district meeting, the MOFD financial reporting ad hoc committee having recommended a write off of \$23 million for an incorrectly recorded prepaid item on the district balance sheet. But one director was furious that the committee failed to provide its information to the rest of the board members prior to the district meeting.

The district purchased a \$28 million pension obligation bond in 2005 to pay down its unfunded pension liability, and recorded the amount as a prepaid item on its balance sheet. Accounting rules changed in 2015 and no longer

should the district have recorded that figure as a prepaid item. After research and evidence collected by the ad hoc committee, comprising directors John Jex and Craig Jorgens, and a conference call that included a senior staff member of the Governmental Standards Accounting Board, the district staff revised the financial reports, writing off the \$23 million balance of the bond and increasing the district's unrestricted general fund deficit to more than \$60 million.

Jex, a retired Deloitte audit partner, later put into perspective the complexity of the accounting involved. "I cannot remember, in my 35 years as an auditor, ever going to the Financial Accounting Standards Board with a question," he said.

Though he did not disagree with its findings, Director Steve Anderson chastised the committee for not including other board members in the loop prior to the district meeting. "The ad hoc committee does not serve the ad hoc committee. The ad hoc committee serves the whole board," he said. Anderson demanded that if another director requests information of an ad hoc committee, it should supply the information, regardless of the inconvenience it might cause.

Anderson was not finished. "I was extremely perturbed when I discovered that a member of my division called me and told me all of the information," he said.

Jorgens did not consider that communication to be seditious.

"It's not a Brown Act violation to communicate to an outsider as long as that person is not acting as an agent of a board member," he said, referring to legislation that regulates how public meetings are conducted.

MOFD outside counsel John Bakker said that ad hoc committee meetings may be held privately but a third director cannot be present unless the meeting is posted and noticed to the public. The ad hoc committee may provide a purely informational, one-way transmission of its findings to the board without posting a public meeting.

The district voted to terminate its financial reporting ad hoc committee, and created one to search for a new district auditor.

ConFire Station 16: Process defeating progress

By Nick Marnell



Proposed Station 16 in Lafayette.

Photo courtesy ConFire

The Lafayette Design Review Commission approved plans for Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Fire Station 16 in February, and the project next proceeds to the Lafayette Planning and Building department for issuance of a building permit.

"Station 16 is about half the size of a normal fire station for us," Deputy Chief Lewis Broschard told the commission. The rebuilt station will include 2,713 square feet of living quarters for three firefighters plus a 1,100-square-foot apparatus bay.

"The station will look like a

ranch-style home, and will look better than what has resided on that spot for the past 20 years," Broschard said, referring to the mobile structure that sat on the site since 1995.

Broschard explained that because of the small space, the Station 16 apparatus bay can only allow the engines to back in to the garage, though ConFire prefers a drive-in facility. He said that the apparatus bay is more than just a garage but also serves as a storage area for personal protective gear and decontamination equipment.

The district has scheduled meetings with an energy consultant, as the building has to adhere to the Contra Costa County sustainable energy requirements. The fire station must also receive a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating indicating that the station is green-certified.

The ConFire project manager, Kitchell Northern California, has begun the prequalification of building contractors. In the meantime, the district is drafting its construction and design plans to submit to the city building department. Bros-

chard said that since a fire station is an essential services facility, it must not only be strong enough to respond to community needs but also become the focal point for relief efforts in a major disaster, and so the construction and design requirements are far more rigid than for a single-family home.

Lafayette resident Erling Horn, a member of the ConFire advisory fire commission, implored officials to move quickly on the project. "I urge approval posthaste before the county decides to spend its money someplace else," he said.

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Lafayette fire commissioner stepping down in June

By Nick Marnell

When Lafayette fire commissioner Bill Granados departs this summer, many of his colleagues say that the loss will be not only for Lafayette and the fire district but for all of Contra Costa County.

Granados was appointed to the Contra Costa County Fire Protection District Advisory Fire Commission in 2002. "I'm 73. Fifteen years is enough time," he said. A ranch owner, he plans to continue roping cows and branding them after he retires June 30. "I've always been kind of a cowboy," he said. He will help the widow of Bob Chapman, who recommended Granados for the commission, keep her cows in line as well.

With his background in chemical engineering, Granados founded ISSCO, a Lafayette company that tests and certifies backflow prevention devices, equipment that prevents used water from reentering the potable water system. "We're protecting the public water supply. Sort of like smog testing for your car," Granados said. He will also keep his hands in this business.

"He's got boundless energy," said Tom Chapman, Bob's brother and commission chairman, whom, to complete the circle, Granados recruited in 2012. "Bill is the most active of the commissioners. He knows what is going on in almost all of the county activities."

Many seconded those attributes: Granados' energy and his involvement. District 2 Supervisor Candace Andersen said that Granados attends nearly every supervisors' and fire board meeting. "He regularly provides us with reliable and helpful insight as we address the many fire and emergency medical issues in the county," she said.

Vince Wells, Local 1230 president, praised Granados as the most active commissioner, always representing the interests of Lafayette. "He advocated for the firefighters and never failed to speak out in our support," Wells said.



Bill Granados and his daughter Lola attend one of his many formal civic events. Photo provided

ConFire Chief Jeff Carman recognized Granados for bringing a level of professionalism to the job and keeping everyone on track when the commission meetings would go awry, which they frequently did until Granados became involved. Granados took his advisory role seriously. "He was at almost every directors meeting letting the supervisors know what he thought of the initiatives the fire district was working on," the chief said.

Carman noted that Granados went beyond just being a fire commissioner for the district, but also tried to create camaraderie among all of the fire commissioners and directors in the county. As president of the Fire Commissioners Association, Granados continues to organize regular meetings of the county fire boards and fire commissioners.

Granados called the hiring of Carman in 2013 the high point of his tenure. As a business executive, Granados could see what ConFire needed in its leadership, and he strongly recommended Carman for the job. "Bill was on one of my interview panels when I applied, so I've always felt a connection with him," Carman said. "He's a class act, and I will always remember him for giving me a chance to be

the fire chief."

The failure of 2012 Measure Q, which would have generated \$16 million annually for ConFire, devastated Granados. "But Carman has kind of erased that," Granados said.

Granados' knowledge and instincts came to bear when he stood out as the lone wolf and predicted, in this newspaper, that in 2013 the ConFire board would not approve Fire Station 46, the joint venture in western Lafayette between ConFire and the Moraga-Orinda Fire District. "Two chiefs, with one station? It's not going to work," he said. He was correct. When Carman scuttled the on-again, off-again plans in 2016, the chief said that the different cultures of the two agencies would have never melded properly.

The cowboy leaves the district in a much better position. "Things are in good hands. There's nothing to really get worked up about now," Granados said. On that note, he imparts this message to Lafayette residents. "Have faith in Chief Carman and his chief officers," Granados said. "They know how to run the fire district."

Andersen will accept applications in April and May and will appoint Granados' District 2 successor in June.



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